



Drugs & Terrorism: Teacher Lesson Plans



Lesson Overview & Background

Lesson Overview:

This lesson plan is designed to help students learn more about the link between the illegal drug use in the United States and acts of terrorism and terror around the world. Students will learn about the different aspects of the war on terrorism, examine the emerging information about “narco-terrorism” and explore how decreasing American drug use could have impact on reducing terror in the world. This lesson includes four distinct classroom activities.

Grade Level: High School (Better suited for grades 11-12)

Estimated Time: 60-90 minute period; 1-2 periods follow-up, if desired.

Background:

The attacks of September 11 brought home how painfully connected the world can be. If we live in a global village, it clearly contains danger as well as alliances. And for the United States, danger is now in the homeland as well as overseas. To be effective, the War on Terrorism will require new levels of cooperation between allies, and to disable terrorist groups it will demand new skill at decoding international alliances.

Even more demanding will be tracking the money connections that fund and support terrorism and blocking the sources. In today’s world, that means drugs. Already investigators are honing in on the connections of what is called “narco-terrorism.”

Drug and intelligence agencies have documented links to illicit drug activities for many of the international terrorist organizations identified by the U.S. State Department in its report of October 2001.

The deposed Taliban regime has been tied to the opium trade in Afghanistan. During the period the Taliban were in power, opium production increased rapidly until 2000. At that point, Afghanistan was supplying nearly 3/4 of the world’s opium and prices had reached a low point because of oversupply. The Taliban imposed a poppy ban which reduced production to near zero in Afghanistan and caused prices for stockpiled opium under Taliban control to rise rapidly, creating a windfall for the Taliban.

In other parts of the world, terrorist organizations are benefiting from drug profits. For example, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) receives about \$300 million from drug sales annually. The United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) relies on the illegal drug trade for 40-70 percent of its income.

But terror associated with drugs goes beyond the acts of terrorist organizations. Many drug trafficking organizations engage in acts that most people would consider terror. These include gruesome public killing of innocents, large scale bombings intended to intimidate governments, kidnapping and torture.

“It’s so important for Americans to know that the traffic in drugs finances the work of terror, sustaining terrorists, that terrorists use drug profits to fund their cells to commit acts of murder,” President George W. Bush declared in December.

And there is another connection, the President stressed, that is important to all Americans. “If you quit drugs,” he asserted, “you join the fight against terror in America.”

Lesson 1

Terrorism and Drug-Related Terror

Teaching Directions:

Start by asking students “What is terrorism?” Field responses and create a master list of ideas on the chalkboard. Encourage students to think both domestically and internationally and to stretch their thinking.

After a full exchange of ideas, read the U.S. State Department definition of terrorism below. This definition has been used since 1983 by the U.S. Government for statistical and analytical purposes.

How many components of the official definition did students come up with in the course of their class discussion? What examples of drug-related terror fall outside of the “official” definition of terrorism? How is the terror of the drug trade related to that of terrorists?

The U.S. government defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant ... targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” Non-combatants are defined as both civilians and “military personnel who at the time of an incident are unarmed or not on duty.” The term “international terrorism” means “terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.” The term “terrorist group” means any group “practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism.”

Follow-Up: Discussion

Ask students to analyze the September 11 attack on America in the context of the official definition of terrorism. Challenge them to go word-by-word through the definition and document how the September 11 attack meets the definition.

Ask students to analyze the drug-related incidents outlined on TheAntiDrug.com. Challenge them to think about how these fit into our understanding of terrorism and terror.

Follow-Up: Writing

With the official definition of terrorism as a guide, ask students to write their own definitions of terrorism, in their own words. Discuss student definitions as a class. (To keep students from merely repeating the official line, make it a brief summary of components they would ADD to the official definition. Why do they think these additions are necessary?)

Lesson 2

The U.S. and Terrorism

Teaching Directions:

Have students read the Hollister Kids teaching column on terrorism (Worksheet A, p. 8). Or read it together as a class. Complete the discussion activities that follow.

Follow-Up: Discussion

Background-Terrorism is a problem that could affect all countries. But as the leading target of terrorist groups, the United States needs to be proactive in solving the problem.

As a class, have students list the effects of the U.S. led War on Terrorism. Help students categorize these effects by using prompts: What's different about the way we... (travel? Define "American?" define "war?")

Then ask them to brainstorm ways the U.S. could further limit terrorism, either alone or working together with other countries.

Follow-Up: Writing

The terrorist attack on sites in the United States brought calls for more security and safety measures. An Office of Homeland Security was created shortly afterward.

As a class, discuss ways security might be effectively increased for Americans, their institutions and the government. Make a master list of suggestions.

Individually, have students write a short paragraph describing their proposals. In small groups, have them compare the pluses and minuses of their ideas.

Follow-Up: News Watch

The War on Terrorism has included use of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan.

Using a newspaper or the Internet, have students report on the latest military activity. Have them write a sentence stating what the forces are doing that is making news.

Then have them write a prediction of what they think will happen next, and explain what factual evidence exists to suggest this might happen.

Ask them to follow up by checking the news over the next several days to see how accurate their predictions were.

Lesson 3

Drugs and Terror

Teaching Directions:

Begin by asking students what they know about connections between drug trafficking and terror. Make a master list of these similarities or connections.

Discuss how they have come to recognize these connections. How have they become aware of connections? What more would they like to know? What sources of information would be important to them to more fully understand the connections?

Explore how knowing more about a connection between drugs and terror would affect their attitudes about both.

Follow Up: Discussion and Activities

Compare and Contrast: Secret or illegal organizations often operate in similar ways. As a class, discuss and compare drug and terrorist organizations.

Have students create Venn diagrams. Use news sources or State Department Internet links to supplement students' knowledge. First, ask students to first list ways that a terrorist organization operates and conditions it needs to be successful. Then ask them to describe the ways that a drug organization operates and conditions it needs to be successful. As students find answers have students fill in their diagrams. Where do most of the entries fall? How much in common do drug and terrorist organizations have? How do they use terror to accomplish their goals?

Finish by challenging students to write a short summary of their findings about the operations of drug and terrorist organizations, the similarities and the connections.

Gathering Information: Discuss with students how drug and intelligence agencies in the United States and other countries are gathering new information every day about the connections between drug trafficking and terror. Examine how the subject of "narco-terrorism" is getting a higher profile as more information is compiled.

As a class, review the information about drugs and terror on TheAntiDrug.com. Discuss the ways in which drugs and terror are linked. Find specific examples to illustrate the link. Why is this information important for Americans to understand? What is the link to our every day lives?

Background: In December the first National Symposium on Narco-Terrorism was hosted outside Washington by the Drug Enforcement Administration Museum and Visitor Center. DEA Administrator Asa Hutchinson participated with experts from Congress and different drug and intelligence agencies. "Law enforcement has understood the connection between drugs and terrorism and violence for many, many years," Hutchinson said. "But now there is a growing public awareness of that."

Lesson 3

Here are some of the connections explored at the Symposium on Narco-Terrorism. Share as a class and discuss. What significance does each example have for stability or security in the world?

- The Taliban government in Afghanistan, which supported the Al Qaeda terrorist network and Osama bin Laden, also supported the trafficking of opium, even as the Taliban said it was banning the trade. (Members of the Afghan Northern Alliance also were active in the drug trade.) During the Taliban rule, Afghanistan was source for 72 percent of the world's opium/heroin supply at one point.
- The drug cartels of Colombia were the source of a ruthless terrorist campaign against government leaders who opposed the lucrative cocaine trade in the country. Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel is believed to have killed 500 policemen, the attorney general of the nation and four presidential candidates. Today, Colombian traffickers have splintered into smaller groups that still use terror to achieve their goals. Terrorist organizations have taken control of much of the territory where coca and opium poppies grow, and these groups either supply the traffickers or make their own deals for the manufacture and transport of cocaine.
- Colombia's FARC and the AUC terrorist organizations engaged in the cocaine/coca trade.
- Basque operations in Spain have been tied to various forms of drug trafficking.

Critical Thinking: Understanding the connection between drugs and terror requires critical thinking about information as it becomes available. Critical thinking means reading something carefully, weighing the information presented and asking questions that would clarify what is being said.

As a class, read the following quotes from participants at the National Symposium on Narco-Terrorism. "It is well established that in such areas beyond the reach of government control and beyond the rule of law, the criminal world, the drug-trafficking world, and the terrorist world merge. The line between them is becoming increasingly difficult to draw. ... Increasingly, terrorist organizations must fund themselves, and the illicit drug trade serves as an attractive and highly lucrative source of income for them." -Raphael Perl, policy analyst for the Congressional Research Service.

"As we start to do better tracking of money, as we crack down on illegal laundering through charitable fronts, the money is going to tend to have to go to illegal activities to fund terrorist organizations, and the tendency is for those terrorist organizations to interconnect around the world." -U.S. Representative Mark Souder (R.-Indiana), Chair, Speaker's Task Force for a Drug-Free America, U.S. Congress

"State sponsored terrorism is diminishing, maybe not as fast as we'd like it to, but it's diminishing, and these organizations are looking for funding. Drugs bring them one thing-quick return on their investment. ...Drugs seem to be now becoming their almost Number One way of approaching this" -Steven Casteel, Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration

After each excerpt is read, have students pretend they are a policy analyst, or journalist, who has just heard the statement. What questions would they ask to further clarify or understand the statement?

Attitude Analysis: One thing that drug and terrorist organizations have in common is an attitude that makes achievement of a goal more important than any human consequences that may result. Terrorists such as those who attacked New York and Washington have no remorse at taking thousands of lives.

Lesson 3

Drug traffickers have no feelings for lives or neighborhoods ruined by drug use. “Both indiscriminately target populations,” said Raphael Perl, policy analyst for the Congressional Research Service. “For the determined drug trafficker, as for the determined terrorist, it is open season with the general population as fair game. [And] both terrorists and drug traffickers target youth.”

As a class, ask students how they react to the actions of individuals or organizations that have no interest in human consequences.

- Do they feel angry?
- Resentful?
- Frightened?
- Resolved?
- How does information about such actions make them want to respond?
- Do they want to avoid these individuals or organizations? Resist them? Work to see that they are dismantled or defeated?

Follow-Up: Writing

Challenge students to write a short essay on the attitudes of drug and terrorist organizations, and steps they would want to take as individuals in response. Have students define their own attitudes first and record them for later comparison. After the exercise, have students consider changes in their own attitudes, as well as actions.

Lesson 4

The Message for Americans

Teacher Directions:

Background: The September 11 terrorist attack deeply touched the emotions of Americans. Connecting terrorism to drug trafficking is also a subject that has great emotional impact. To determine how people feel about such news, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America conducted a series of nationwide opinion polls of students and adults.

Start by asking students how they feel about the connection between terror and the drug trade. Do they feel there is a strong connection? A weak connection? Or do they need more information to make a decision? What would that information be? Where would it come from? And how would they feel about drug use if proceeds from trafficking were used to support terrorism?

Finish the discussion by taking a poll of the class. Ask two key questions:

- Do you think international terrorism is financed, at least in part, by the illegal drug trade?
- Would knowing that the use of illegal drugs supports terrorist activities make you less likely to use drugs?

Then review the account of the poll taken by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (Worksheet B, p. 9).

Follow-Up: Compare Results

Compute percentages for answers to the poll questions asked of your class and compare them with the percentages in the national survey taken by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Are they similar or different? What conclusions can your students make about the comparison?

Follow-Up: Say It With Art

An editorial cartoon uses art to state an opinion, or to urge action on an issue.

Find examples of editorial cartoons in a newspaper to show students how they work.

Then challenge them to create an editorial cartoon of their own about the connection between terrorism and drug trafficking. Share cartoons as a class, and display on a bulletin board.

Follow-Up: TV Talk

Public Service Announcements are TV or radio ads designed to call attention to an issue.

Divide your class into teams and challenge them to become TV ad producers. Their task is to create a credible, effective Public Service Announcement to show how terrorism is funded by drug money. Ask them to write a script, plot visuals and pick stars to appear in the ads. They can choose from favorite actors on TV or in the movies, or pick “unknown” performers.

For extra credit, encourage students to videotape their ads and show them to the class.

Follow Up: Message Analysis

When issues are connected, it can change how they are viewed. The connection between terrorism and drug trafficking is a new example. As a class, discuss how connecting drugs and terrorism affects people’s reaction to each issue. Is one affected more than the other? What is the final, cumulative effect of connecting drugs and terrorism?

Worksheet A

The U.S. and Terrorism (for use with Lesson 2)

Terrorists are among the most difficult enemies to fight. They often do not represent governments, but are smaller groups that have vowed to use violence to achieve their goals. And it is often impossible to see them coming.

The United States has been grimly waging an international war on terrorism since the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11.

The War on Terrorism has ousted the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which had supported the Al Qaeda terrorist organization believed to be behind the attack on America. It has destroyed terrorist training camps and confiscated computers detailing how attacks were planned and carried out. It has searched the caves and countryside of Afghanistan to capture terrorist leaders.

Yet the War on Terrorism is expected to require a long commitment by both the U.S. and other nations.

Terror Tactics

As its name suggests, terrorism uses violence to cause terror-to scare people enough to make them do what the terrorists want. Terrorists do not just target soldiers and military sites. They often kill private citizens, including children. A favorite approach of terrorists is setting off bombs in places run by their enemies, or public places crowded with people.

Such bombings have prevented a peace settlement for years in Northern Ireland, where Protestants and Catholics have used terrorism in their fight for control.

Such a bombing by U.S. citizens angry at the government killed 168 people at the federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1995. And in the fall of 2000 the USS Cole destroyer was attacked in the Mideast, leaving 17 American sailors dead and 39 wounded.

Enemies of U.S.

Terrorist attacks often target the United States because it has influence in many countries. U.S. support for Israel has made it a target of terrorists in the Mideast who want the U.S. to stay out of the region's affairs.

In February 1993 Mideast terrorists set off bombs at the World Trade Center, killing six people and wounding more than 1,000 others. In 1983, a truck bomber in Lebanon, killed 241 Marines in their barracks in Beirut.

With targets destroyed on U.S. soil, President Bush and military leaders are making one thing clear: They will go all out to fight terrorists. It is a huge and difficult task, with no guarantees of success.

But U.S. officials feel they have no choice. To let up on terrorism even a little, they feel, would be to give a victory to terrorists.

(This youth education feature was adapted with permission from the syndicated column "Newspaper Plus" by Hollister Kids. "Newspaper Plus" was a finalist in the Best Youth Column category in the 2000 Distinguished Achievement Competition of the Association of Educational Publishers, EdPress.)

Worksheet B

(For Use With Lesson 4)

Polls Find American Teens and Parents Perceive Link Between Illegal Drugs and Terrorism, Suggesting Possible New Anti-Drug Approach

WASHINGTON, Dec. 4-Six out of 10 American teens say knowing there is a link between illegal drugs and terrorism would make them less likely to use drugs, according to a series of polls conducted for the Partnership for a Drug-Free America® (PDFA). A similar majority of parents say knowing the link exists would help their efforts to talk with their kids about drugs.

“Many Americans are now considering the impact of terrorism on their daily lives,” said Stephen J. Pasierb, president and CEO of the Partnership. “For an organization devoted to finding new, credible ways to reduce the demand for illegal drugs, it made sense to see what Americans thought about the possibility of a link between drugs and terrorism. “Clearly teens and parents believe the link exists, and since there’s no question that globally drug money does sustain international terrorism, this points to a possible new direction for the Partnership’s anti-drug efforts.”

A series of nationally projectable telephone surveys, each polling 800 parents with kids ages 12-17 living at home, found the majority of them think international terrorism is financed, at least in part, by the illegal drug trade. Similar surveys each polling 500 kids ages 12-17 found nearly half of them agreed as well.

More importantly, six out of 10 teens said knowing the use of illegal drugs supports terrorist activities would make them less likely to use drugs. (Margins of error for the polls was plus/minus 3.5 percent to plus/minus 5 percent.)

“Research has shown social disapproval of drugs to be one of the strongest attitudes influencing the decisions kids make about using drugs,” Pasierb said. “Knowledge of the link between terrorism and the illicit drug trade may indeed prove to be an influence on teen drug use.”

Noting that three out of four teens and parents say they would favor having information about the link between terrorism and illegal drugs delivered by drug education television commercials, Pasierb said the Partnership is testing several concepts for such messages- messages he said must be based on the facts.

“It would be wrong to imply that the purchase of illegal drugs on our streets directly funded the terrorist attacks of September 11,” Pasierb said. “But terrorism is not just an American issue. It’s a global issue. While parents with memories of drug-financed violence in Colombia or in Mexico could readily understand the distinction, the challenge will be creating credible messages for kids who view terrorism only through the prism of attacks on America. ...

“The link between illegal drugs and terrorism may be a timely new avenue for parents struggling with what to say to their kids about drugs,” Pasierb said. “Talking about the ways drug money pays for violence against innocents around the globe could be another way for parents to initiate conversations meant to discourage their kids from using drugs.”

Teacher Resources & Credits

For More Information:

Education Standards:

www.theantidrug.com/drugs_terror/standards.html

Teacher Resources:

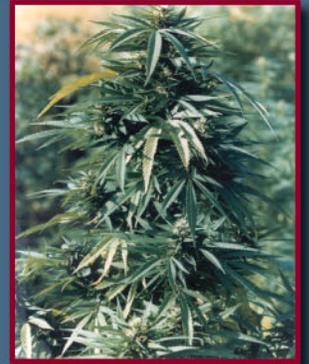
- TheAntiDrug.com section on Drugs & Terror: www.theantidrug.com/drugs_terror/index.html
- Terrorism, Drug Trafficking Inextricably Linked, U.S. Experts Say: www.usembassy.it/file2001_12/alia/a1120508.htm
- Terror Groups Linked to Drug Trafficking: www.theantidrug.com/drugs_terror/terrorgroups.html
- Hollister Kids Teaching Column on Fighting Terrorism (Worksheet A, p. 8)
- Polls Find American Teens and Parents Perceive Link Between Illegal Drugs and Terrorism, Suggesting Possible New Anti-Drug Approach (Worksheet B, p. 9)

Credits:

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